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PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1996-1997

Revised estimates under section 26E, Conference services, and section 26F, Administration Geneva

Conference servicing of the Conference of States Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Sixteenth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Revised estimates under section 26E, Conference services, and section 26F, Administration, Geneva: conference servicing of the Conference of States Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change" (A/C.5/50/58). During its consideration of the report, the Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General who provided additional information.

2. In its resolution 50/115 of 20 December 1995, the General Assembly decided to include in the calender of conferences and meetings for 1996-1997 the sessions of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies envisaged for that biennium entailing 12 weeks of conference servicing. The Assembly further requested the Secretary-General to make the necessary arrangements to include in the calender of conferences and meetings for the biennium 1998-1999 those sessions of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies that the Conference might need to convene in that period.

3. As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General (A/50/716/Add.1) and the statement of programme budget implications (A/C.5/50/39), the full cost of the 1996 programme of meetings was estimated at $3,522,200. The General Assembly decided to consider the actual amount required under section 26E, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997, 1/ including the need

for an additional appropriation, at its resumed fiftieth session, in 1996, on the basis of revised estimates submitted by the Secretary-General (see A/50/823, para. 3).

4. The Advisory Committee notes that the annual programme of meetings of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies would amount to a total of 120 meetings over three two-week periods, for a total of six calender weeks a year, equivalent to 12 weeks of meetings a year. The Committee further notes that document requirements would amount to 2,004 pages a year in the original language, comprising 147 documents. The Committee also notes that, while the 1996 meetings of the Conference of the Parties and of its subsidiary bodies will be held at Geneva, those for 1997 will be held at Bonn.

5. Upon inquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the meeting requirement of six weeks a year results from decisions of the Conference of the Parties and the subsidiary bodies.

6. As to the extent to which scheduled meetings were held in the past, the Advisory Committee was informed that, while in 1995, out of 66 meetings, 57 were held and nine were cancelled, for the session held from 26 February to 8 March 1996, 27 meetings were held and 13 were cancelled.

7. In connection with documents, it is the view of the Advisory Committee that in the light of the number of meetings, the estimate of documentation appeared excessive. In this connection, the Committee recommends that in line with the economy measures being undertaken in the United Nations Secretariat, the Conference of Parties should be requested to review the number of documents envisaged and the manner in which they are to be produced.

8. The Secretary-General estimated that, while 20 per cent of the interpretation costs and cost of reproduction for meetings at Geneva might be absorbed from within the permanent capacity, all requirements for translation and text processing would require an additional appropriation.

9. As to the costs of interpreters, the Advisory Committee was informed that they were based on eight assignments per week per interpreter instead of the previous standard of seven assignments per week per interpreter.

10. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 11 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/50/58) that the 1997 meetings at Bonn will also involve additional requirements, including the costs of travel and subsistence of interpreters, supervisory staff sent from Geneva and reproduction for in-session documents.

11. In response to an inquiry as to why some staff were not recruited at Bonn, the Advisory Committee was informed that in order to guarantee service by a full complement of staff, it would be necessary to send staff from Geneva to Bonn, at least for the 1997 meetings; however, for meetings held after 1997, it would be possible to recruit some staff at Bonn. The Advisory Committee trusts that the possibility of hiring some staff at Bonn for the 1997 meetings will still be explored and therefore requests the Secretary-General to review the resource requirements for 1997 with a view to reducing costs.

12. The Advisory Committee welcomes the use of remote translation and text processing for in-sessional documentation for meetings at Bonn (see A/C.5/50/58, para. 12).

13. Upon inquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the staffing table for the core administrative budget of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies in 1996 consists of 43.5 posts (1 head of secretariat, 2 at the D-2 level, 4 at D-1, 6.5 at P-5, 5 at P-4, 3 at P-3, 4 at P-2 and 18 for General Service staff), which in 1997, would increase by six posts (0.5 at P-5 and 5.5 at P-3), to comprise 49.5 posts.

14. With regard to the inquiry as to when the Convention secretariat would move to Bonn, the Advisory Committee was informed that some staff were already at Bonn and that it was expected that the secretariat would be fully installed by the end of the year.

15. In paragraph 14 of his report (A/C.5/50/58), the Secretary-General estimated the full costs at current rates at $7,751,300 for the biennium ($3,580,600 for 1996 and $4,170,700 for 1997). The Advisory Committee notes that the additional requirements for the biennium, for which an additional appropriation would be considered in the context of the revised appropriation to be approved by the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, in December 1996, amounted to $5,517,000 ($2,446,200 for 1996 and $3,070,800 for 1997).

16. The Advisory Committee observes that such additional appropriation as may eventually be approved by the General Assembly would be subject to the provisions of the contingency fund. As also recalled by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/50/58, para. 30), under the procedure established by the General Assembly in its resolution 41/213 of 19 December 1986, a contingency fund is established for each biennium to accommodate additional expenditures derived from legislative mandates not provided for in the programme budget. In resolution 50/216 of 23 December 1995, the Assembly noted that a balance of $19,427,000 remained in the contingency fund for the biennium 1996-1997. The net amount available in the contingency fund after making provision of $5,517,000 for servicing the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies would therefore be $13,910,000.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/50/6/Rev.1), vol. II.